

What is



Planning?

Youth Programme Report - July 2025



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00 FORWARD



‘The ‘What is planning?’ programme gave the next generation an insight not only into the world of the built environment, but also introduced the challenges of creating neighbourhoods everyone wants to live in. I studied architecture at University, but would have relished this opportunity to learn about planning at school, especially in such an innovative, active and untimely fun way. It was clear the young people involved absorbed a lot of knowledge that they will be able to use to make informed decisions about their future careers’.

Cllr Kemi Akinola, Deputy Leader



‘It’s been incredible to see young people learning about the built environment and how planning shapes the neighbourhoods and communities we grow up in. Young people know their city, they know their area, and yet they are often the voices least heard in regards to how we plan our cities and boroughs. Having a new generation learn about the planning system and maybe explore it as a future career is an incredible and important initiative.’

Cllr Aydin Dikerdem, Labour Cabinet Member for Housing

01 ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Throughout the 2025 academic year, Wandsworth Council's Planning Engagement Team delivered a series of creative and collaborative workshops for young people aged 11 to 18 who attend secondary schools and youth organisations across the borough.

These workshops focused on introducing participants to the planning system, exploring various career opportunities within the field, and demonstrating the influence they could have as community members. Beginning in January, the programme consisted of one-off workshops held at each organisation, culminating in a final celebration event in July.

The learning objectives were to:

- Inspire young people to learn about and engage with town planning.
- Enable young people to take part in engaging sessions exploring their local area.
- Introduce them to the concept of urban planning and its impact on places.
- Encourage creative thinking and teamwork.
- Help them recognise the agency they hold in influencing their built environment.
- Highlight potential career paths within the planning sector that they may not have been familiar with.

We attended 6 schools and 1 youth club.

Reaching:

1. South Thames College, SW18 2PP – 28th January 2025
2. Harris Academy Battersea, SW11 5AP - 12th March 2025
3. St John Bosco College, SW11 3DQ – 19th March 2025
4. Burntwood Secondary School, SW17 0AQ – 23rd April 2025
5. Devas Youth Club, SW11 5EN - 16th April
6. Earlsfield Primary School, SW18 3QQ – 9th June 2025
7. Southfield Secondary School, SW18 5JU – 9th July 2025 (attended the Celebration event).



Workshop in Burntwood School

02a ‘WHAT IS PLANNING’ WORKSHOPS

“It was reallt fun and interactive”

Student from Burntwood School

Each workshop lasted up to 2 hours, or a double lesson in most schools. An interactive icebreaker helped the group explore how they each use their town centre. The young people were invited to show how they used the town centre by moving around the room based on the image shown on screen – for example moving to the right if they use local parks. This physical and visual activity encouraged young people to reflect on the diversity of experiences within the group and highlighted how individuals can value and use places very differently. This led into a brief reflection and an outline of the day’s structure and aims.

The next session provided a basic understanding of planning through a presentation. Key topics such as the purpose and history planning, planning policy, and the range of factors that inform planning decisions were introduced. Participants were encouraged to challenge common misconceptions through a “what planning is not” game and to take part in discussions about what makes a good place to live. This was followed by a role-playing budget game, in which each group was given a fictional local site and a set budget. They debated how to allocate their funds, created a ‘shopping list’ of their chosen priorities, and presented their decisions to the rest of the group - promoting critical thinking and collaborative decision-making.

Building on their budget choices, participants then moved into a creative design activity, where they brought their community visions to life using collage, drawings, and model-making materials. Designs had to incorporate key features such as housing, parks, shops, and schools, and consider themes like sustainability, accessibility, and community needs. Each group presented their proposals to the room. The workshop concluded with a presentation on careers in planning, outlining both traditional and apprenticeship routes into the profession, and highlighting a wide range of related roles. The session ended with a Q&A and reflection on how young people can influence planning today, before closing with a summary of key messages and the distribution of the ‘What is Planning’ booklet.

Workshop format:

1. Ice breaker activity: What do you use in the Town Centre
2. Presentation 1: What is planning?
3. Activity 1: Budget activity – what would you change in your town centre?
4. Activity 2: Collaging activity - Designing the change
5. Presentation 2: Careers in Planning and influence as community members



Workshop in Burntwood School

BUDGET GAME SHOPPING LIST

Item Name	Quantity	Cost
Total Cost		

Activity worksheets

- Centre:** W4000 (Icon: Industrial buildings)
- Hospital:** W3000 (Icon: NHS ambulance)
- Cinema/Theatre:** W3000 (Icon: Theatre interior)
- Train/Bus station:** W4000 (Icon: Train and bus)
- Housing:** W5000 (Icon: Residential buildings)
- Public art:** W500 (Icon: Group of people)

02b CELEBRATION EVENT

The celebration event was a full-day programme of presentations and creative workshop activities held in the Council Chamber of Wandsworth Town Hall bringing together students from the schools that had taken part in the ‘What is Planning?’ workshop series.

The aim of the day was to build on the knowledge and skills developed during the workshops, offering young people from across Wandsworth Borough a unique opportunity to deepen their understanding of how spatial decisions are made, explore career pathways in planning and the built environment, and learn how they can become more involved in shaping their communities now and in the future.

The event began with a short introduction to the team and a warm-up icebreaker. This activity followed the same format as those used in earlier workshops - students were invited to respond physically to questions about how they use their town centre, encouraging movement, reflection, and group interaction.

After the icebreaker, the day moved into a series of short, career-focused presentations delivered by four Wandsworth Council officers. Each speaker, working across Development Management, Viability, Planning Engagement, and Arts and Regeneration, shared their personal journeys into the sector and explained the nature of their roles. These presentations aimed to demystify the planning profession and showcase the diverse range of career opportunities available within and alongside the built environment sector. Students were encouraged to ask questions and reflect on which roles interested them.

Following a short break, the students heard from two ward councillors, Cllr Kemi Akinola, Deputy Leader and Cllr Aydin Dikerdem, Labour Cabinet Member for Housing. Their session offered insight into the role of councillors, the influence of politics in planning, and the ways in which young people can stay informed and contribute to local decision-making. This was followed by a brief recap presentation on the key principles of planning - designed to refresh the memory of returning students and bring new attendees up to speed.

The afternoon activities centred on a two-part interactive planning simulation. In Part I, students were divided into mixed-school groups to promote collaboration and new connections. They were introduced to a fictional but provocative scenario: a developer had proposed replacing the historically significant Wandsworth Town Hall with the tallest residential tower in London. Each student was assigned a persona representing a specific stakeholder - from heritage campaigners and business owners to environmentalists and local residents. Working in their teams, they used worksheets to develop arguments either supporting or opposing the development, based on their assigned perspectives.

“It was fun and engaging”

Student from South Thames College when asked what they enjoyed the most.



Career Presentation



Conversation with the Cllr Kemi Akinola, Deputy Leader (left-hand-side) and Cllr Aydin Dikerdem, Labour Cabinet Member for Housing (right-hand-side)

02b CELEBRATION EVENT

After a lunch break, Activity Part 2 resumed with groups refining their arguments and preparing for a structured debate. With support from the facilitators, each group nominated a speaker or pair to present their views. The debate itself was chaired by Councillor Kemi Akinola and simulated the format of a real planning committee meeting, giving students the chance to engage in civic dialogue and practice public speaking. At the end of the debate, all students were invited to cast a final vote - this time not as their personas, but as themselves - to approve or reject the proposed scheme.

The event concluded with a short reflection session and Q&A, where students shared their thoughts on what they had learned and how their understanding of planning had changed. Final remarks from the team emphasised the importance of young voices in shaping the future of Wandsworth and beyond. Before departing, students were thanked for their participation and received goody bags as a token of appreciation.



Student engaging in activities

Task 3: DEBATE



Student engaging in debate

03 KEY FINDINGS

During the course of the programme, we delivered 7 workshops for over 120 young people aged between 10-19.

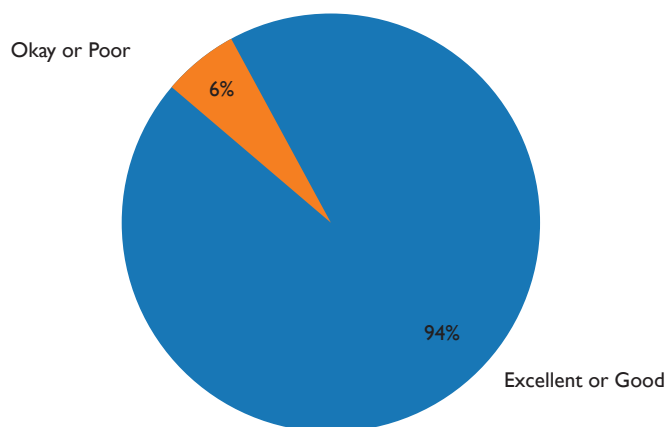
Of the students who responded to the feedback forms, under two fifths of the students (37.9%) of students said they knew about planning before participating in the workshop - highlighting a significant knowledge gap that this workshop helped address.

“How committed to get our views and what can be improved” - South Thames student

Though initially unfamiliar most of the students understood the importance of informing their local areas and expressed enthusiasm when given the opportunity to suggest improvements in the areas they know and love.

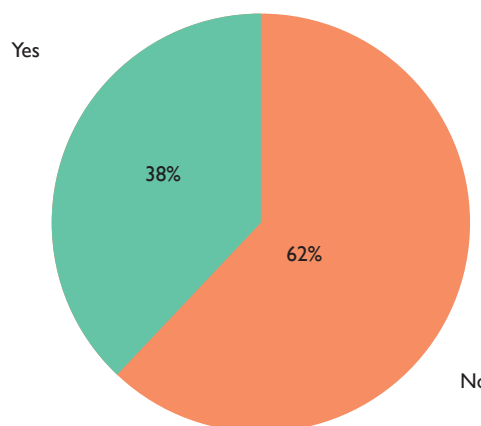
Workshop programme feedback

1. How would you rate the workshop overall?



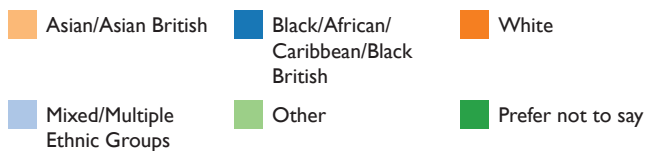
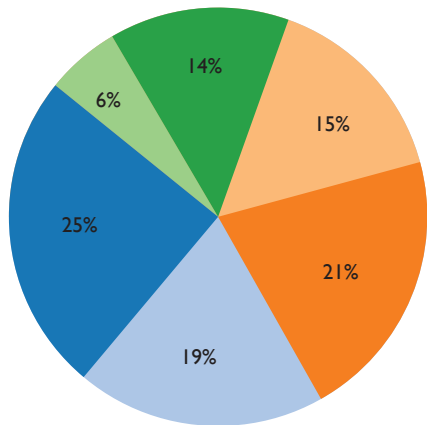
94% of the participants rated the workshop as Excelling or Good, this data was supported by a request by some teachers for a repeat of the programme in their schools.

2. Did you know about Planning before participating in the workshop?

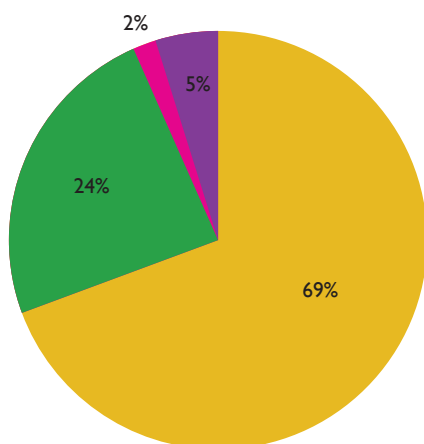


This visual highlights that a majority of attendees were introduced to planning for the first time during the workshop.

3. How would you describe your ethnic group?



4. What gender do you identify as?



5. Feedback from teachers

“Really engaging and knowledgeable facilitators! Thank you.”

- Burntwood School teacher

“We really appreciate you giving up your time to come and the children really gained a lot from your insights!”

- Earlsfield Primary School teacher

“Thank you once again for the workshop, our students enjoyed it.”

- St John Bosco College teacher

CREDITS

Teachers

Thank you to the following teachers for supporting this project: Catriona McMahon from Burntwood School, Kleberson DeSouza from Harris Academy Battersea, Vera Shah and Claire Stewert Southfields Academy, Sarah Sharp and Martha Coughlan from St John bosco College, Emma Adjei from South Thames College and Chloe Payne from Earlsfield Primary School.

Councillors

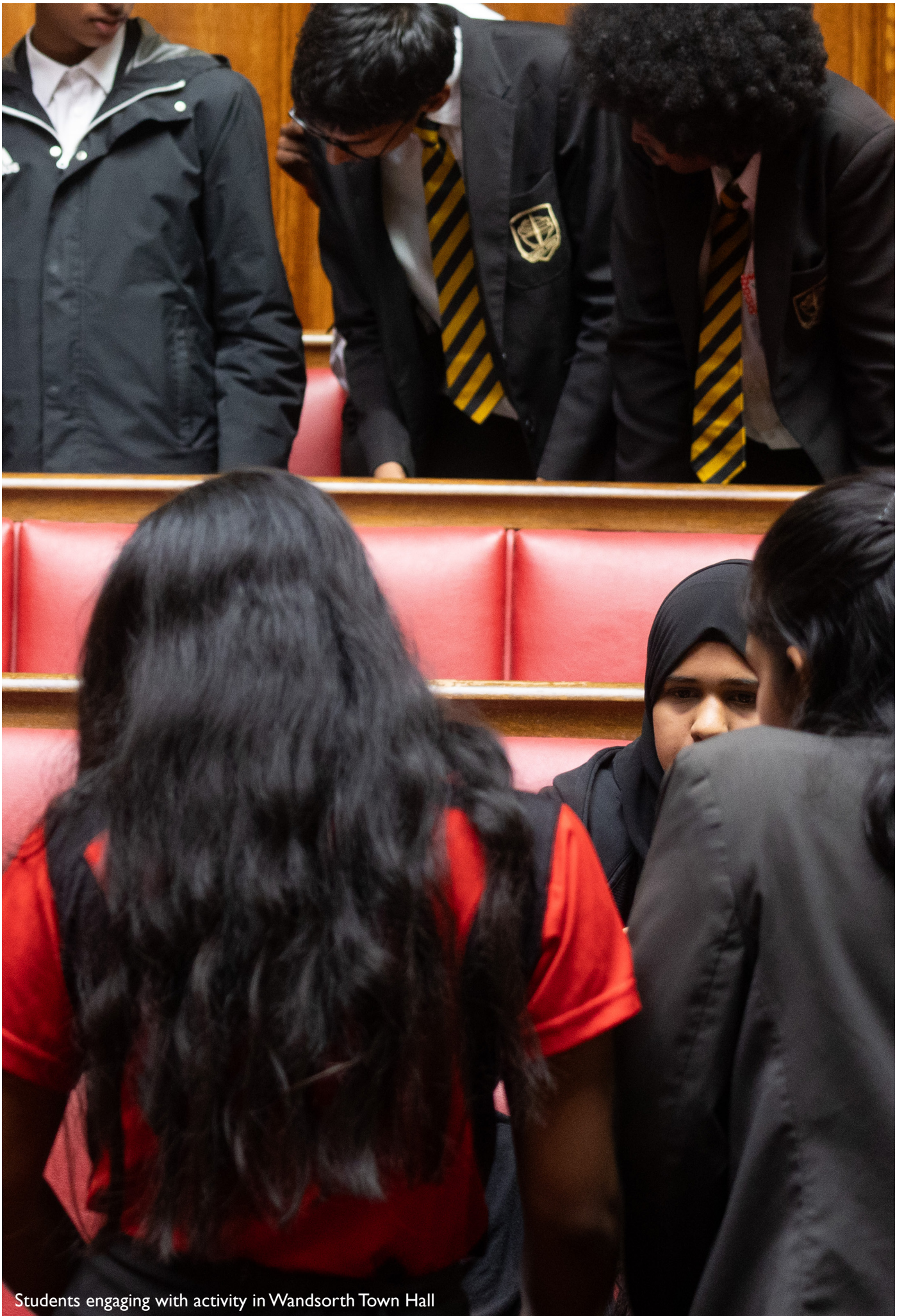
Thank you to the councillors for enthusiastically engaging with the programme and young people: Cllr Kemi Akinola, Deputy Leader and Cllr Aydin Dikerdem, Labour Cabinet Member for Housing.

Council Staff

Many thanks goes to the council officers who supported this programme: Jade Blake, Keziah Gordon, Kirsty Jeffrey, Pat Ingram and Thembe Mvula.

Thank you to the facilitators and presenters who supported the sessions:

Amy Ingle, Bebert Longi, Cathy Molloy, Grace Crannis, Grace Logan, Henrietta Ford, Jade Morgan, Juliet Rossi, Larry Botchway, Nancy Collinge and Safaa Usmani.



Students engaging with activity in Wandsworth Town Hall

